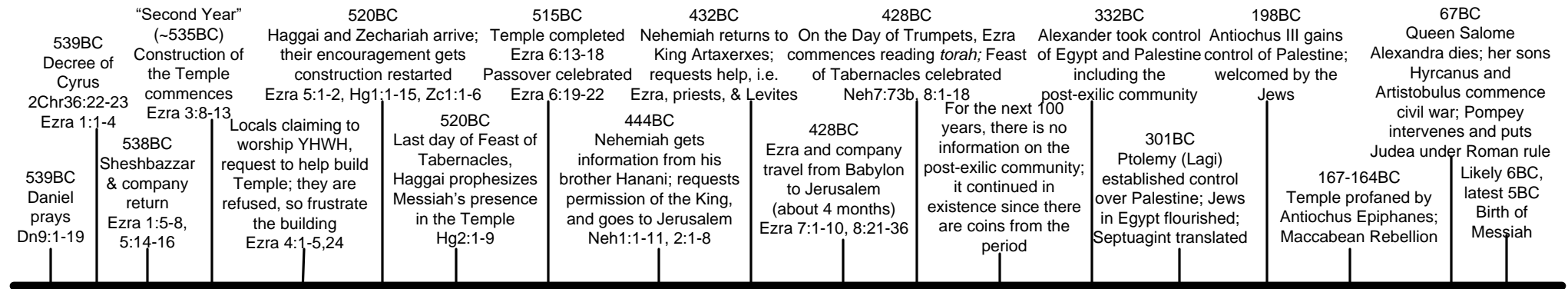


# Restoration from Exile

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Cyrus (550-529BC) Cambyses (529-521BC) Darius I (521-486BC) Xerxes (Ahasuerus) (486-465BC) Artaxerxes I (465-425BC) Darius II (425-404BC) Artaxerxes II (404-359BC) Artaxerxes III (359-338) Darius III (336-330BC) Alexander (336-323BC) Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163BC) Pompey 66BC Herod "the Great" 37-4BC



70 years of Babylonian hegemony over 609-539BC  
Zerubbabel and larger company return, build an altar, commence sacrifice, keep Feast of Tabernacles  
Ezra 2:1-2, 3:1-6

Tattenai, the Persian governor, writes to Darius questioning the construction; Darius responds that it is authorized and Tattenai is to support it  
Ezra 5:6-17, 6:1-12

For about 70 years there is little information on the restored community in Jerusalem, but they appear NOT to have flourished  
Neh1:3

Despite constant opposition, Nehemiah gets a rudimentary wall built in 52 days  
Neh3:1-32, 4:1-23, 6:15-19, Ezra 4:7-23

During this time, a more substantial wall was completed and a dedication ceremony was carried out  
Neh12:27-43

**The Book of Malachi:** "malachi" means "my messenger"; Targum adds "who is Ezra". It is not clear whether "Malachi" is a name or a title. **Problems:** Priests offering imperfect animals (1:1-14); Priests NOT teaching correctly (2:6-9); divorce and marriage to foreign women (2:10-16); failure to contribute full tithe (3:6-10). **Remnant Community:** "those who feared YHWH ... shall be my treasured possession ... the righteous ... who serves God ..." (3:16-18). **The Day of YHWH:** "... the wicked ... will be ashes ... when I act ... remember torah of my servant Moses ... I will send you Elijah ... before the day of YHWH ... he will turn the hearts of fathers ... and children ..." (4:1-16)

Antipater, father of Herod, used Hyrcanus to ingratiate himself to Rome, resulting in Herod's rise to power

**The Book of Esther:** takes place under Xerxes (Ahasuerus). The Book of Ezra notes, "And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." (Ezra 4:6 ESV) There were large numbers of Israelites scattered all over the Persian Empire, "Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who hated them" (Esther 9:16 ESV)

**Ezra's Commission:** Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. ... For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to **make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law (dath) of your God**, which is in your hand ... With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem. ... **Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven**, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons. ... And you, Ezra, according to **the wisdom of your God that is in your hand**, appoint **magistrates and judges** who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, **all such as know the laws (dath) of your God**. And those who do not know them, **you shall teach**. Whoever will not obey the law (dath) of your God and the law (dath) of the king, **let judgment be strictly executed on him**, for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment. (Ezra 7:12,14,17,23,25-26 ESV)

**Reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra:** When Nehemiah arrived in 444BC, he found some persons had become wealthy and were oppressing the poor (see Nehemiah chapter 5). On his second term around 430BC he found violations of the Temple (Neh13:4-9); Levites were NOT being provisioned (Neh13:10-13); the Sabbath was being violated (Neh13:15-22); and, there were marriages with foreign women (Neh13:23-27). When Ezra arrived in 428BC, the marriage problem was considered paramount. (Ezra 9:1-4, 10:2-28).

**The Hasmonean Dynasty:** These kings were very aggressive militarily, expanding their territory until it approximated the Kingdom of Solomon. **Aristobulus** and **Alexander Jannaeus** were worse kings than the Seleucids. Queen **Salome Alexandra**, widow of Alexander Jannaeus was the only good ruler of the Dynasty. The last of the Hasmoneans, **Mariamne**, was a wife of Herod "the Great".

**The Maccabean Rebellion:** 167BC **Antiochus Epiphanes** issued decree outlawing worship of YHWH; an idol was setup on the altar in the Temple. **Mattathias**, an elderly priest, and his sons refused to comply; and, headed to the hills. Mattathias appointed **Judas Maccabeus** military commander and his brother **Simon** as chief counselor. 166BC Mattathias died. Judas won victory after victory. 164BC Jerusalem was retaken; the temple cleansed and rededicated. At the outset of the rebellion, Judas was joined by the **Hasideans** (1Macc2:42). As the war continued, the objectives shifted to political gains rather than religious freedom – the Hasideans withdrew their support. About 160BC, Judas was killed and his brother **Jonathan** assumed military command. In 152BC, Jonathan accepted appointment to the position of High Priest by the Seleucid King, Alexander. Within ten years Jonathan was killed and Simon, the last of the brothers, assumed leadership in 142BC. He was killed in 134BC and his son **John Hyrcanus** commenced the **Hasmonean Dynasty**.

**The remnant community at the First Advent:** In the days of Herod ... there was **a priest named Zechariah** ... And he had **a wife ... Elizabeth**. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. (Luke 1:5-6 ESV)  
In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent to **a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph**, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was **Mary**. (Luke 1:26-27 ESV)  
Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was **Simon**, and this man was **righteous and devout**, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (Luke 2:25 ESV)  
And there was **a prophetess, Anna** ... of the tribe of Asher. ... She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. (Luke 2:36a, 37b ESV)

**Date of Ezra:** John Bright in his book, *A History of Israel*, Fourth Edition, Excursus II, "The Date of Ezra's Mission to Jerusalem", pages 391-402, provides a summary of the various interpretations of the chronological data related to Ezra and Nehemiah. His conclusion is that the **most likely date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem is 428BC**.